



Environmental issues: Environment protection act, challenges of implementation and livelihood security

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General Note



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The decline in environmental quality has been evidenced by increasing all kinds of pollution, loss of vegetation and biodiversity, excessive concentrations of harmful chemicals and green house gases in the ambient atmosphere causing climate change, growing risks of environmental accidents, and threat to food chain and life support systems. Although there are existing laws dealing directly or indirectly with several environmental matters and even the Environment Protection Act, 1986 received the assent of the President and published in the Gazette of India followed by several rules handling environmental problems from time to time till 2013; the main concern is how to get these legislations implemented in letter and spirit? Moreover, the existing laws/rules generally focus on specific types of pollution related problems or on specific categories of hazardous substances, or wild-life protection. Some major areas of environmental hazards and disposal problems are not covered. Removal of mangroves in coastal areas and forests on hills are ignored facing the consequences of natural disasters. Problem of tackling issues related to disposal of effluents into rivers and estuaries (affecting coastal ecosystems) remain intact. There are inadequate linkages in handling matters of industrial and environmental safety issues. Control mechanisms to guard against slow, insidious build up of hazardous substances, especially new chemicals, in the environment (soil, water and air) are weak. Many areas need to be redefined and the multiplicity of regulatory agencies needs to be rectified for proper implementation of laws and regulations. In many areas problems like accumulation of heavy metals like arsenic, boron, lead, etc and their seepage in drinking ground water is a matter of health concern both of human and animal population. Despite of 67 years of independence, the major challenge remains of implementation of laws for handling the municipal solid and liquid wastes and major rivers which are life lines of millions of people remain polluted. Those who protect the environment through greening (through plantations) are unable to harvest the benefit of carbon credit as we lack easily implementable policies. There are several environmental issues which directly or indirectly affect livelihood security particularly of poor people including farmers with or without land. Some of these issues have been discussed in this paper.